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RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 1087
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000283

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PARM](#) [PINR](#) [SY](#) [IS](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: JUMBLATT PREOCCUPIED WITH SECURITY ISSUES

REF: A. BEIRUT 205

[1](#)B. ABU DHABI 222

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Michele J. Sison for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Security concerns weighed heavily on Druse leader Walid Jumblatt during a February 22 meeting with the Charge. He sought U.S. assistance in persuading Saad Hariri to discuss recent Sunni-Shia clashes with Amal leader Nabih Berri, pointing to an upcoming Hizballah rally as another source of potential friction. On the eve of Arab League SYG Amr Moussa's planned next visit to Lebanon, Hariri reportedly told Moussa's Chief of Staff that March 14 will not accept a 10/10/10 cabinet formulation. Furthermore, the communique should state that all UN Security Council Resolutions must be applied. Jumblatt warned that, despite recent progress with the Special Tribunal, Syria would not change its behavior until the Asad regime truly feels threatened. End summary.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Charge Sison, accompanied by Pol/Econ Chief, met with Druse leader Walid Jumblatt and Telecommunications Minister Marwan Hamadeh at Jumblatt's residence in Clemenceau on February 20. Jumblatt, who had been told by Hariri advisor Ghattas Khoury "not to move," requested the meeting to catch up on recent developments. (Note: Jumblatt, who probably is at the top of the list of assassination targets, told the Charge the previous evening by phone that he was not scheduling any meetings by phone; the meeting with the Charge was arranged via messengers. End note.)

SAAD AND BERRI NEED TO TALK

[1](#)3. (C) Jumblatt's primary message was that, given recent clashes between the two camps, Future Movement leader Saad Hariri and Amal leader Nabih Berri needed to talk. Lebanese Armed Forces G-2 Intelligence Directorate had held a meeting between members of the two groups, Future Movement and Amal, to prevent further friction, but there needed to be political talks in addition to security discussions, he stressed. He had urged Saad to speak with Berri, but Saad's response was a

"lat no."

¶4. (C) Jumblatt pointed to the Hizballah rally on February 22 to commemorate the assassinations of Hizballah officials, which SYG Hassan Nasrallah would address, as the next potential flashpoint. What are they looking for, Hamadeh asked, open war with Israel? The Shia in south Lebanon don't want it, he said, and Berri is certainly not looking for an "adventure" in the south.

¶5. (C) Referring to the January 27 clashes between the LAF and Shia demonstrators that resulted in eight deaths and the subsequent arrest of 19 LAF members, Jumblatt said that the army must be condemned for the deaths. At the same time, he added, we are not Norway, and the army needs to be able to act in these circumstances or risk becoming demoralized. Two of the LAF personnel who have been detained following the incident were Shia, he claimed, and were responsible for killing five of the Shia demonstrators.

NO TO 10/10/10

¶6. (C) Noting Arab League SYG Amr Moussa's projected February 22 return to Beirut, Jumblatt stressed that March 14 needed to have a united position vis-a-vis the initiative. Asked whether the majority would accept a 10/10/10 cabinet, Jumblatt did not respond directly, but said that the opposition would not accept it unless other conditions were met, including agreement on the name of the next prime minister, and agreement that the Ministries of the Interior, Finance, and Justice would go to the opposition.

¶7. (C) The opposition wants the Ministry of the Interior, he said, to ensure control over the security and intelligence services. Furthermore, the opposition will brand Elias Murr as March 14, thereby ensuring that he does not become

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Interior Minister. (Note: Currently Defense Minister, Murr is generally expected to be March 14's choice for Interior Minister in the new cabinet, to maintain control not only over the GOL's security apparatus, but also to control key issues like electoral reform in the run-up to the 2009 parliamentary elections. End note.)

¶8. (C) Fielding a call from Saad from Saudi Arabia, Jumblatt reported that Saad had told Moussa's Chief of Staff Hashem Youssef (who had just arrived in Beirut) that March 14 would not/not accept 10/10/10. Furthermore, the Arab League communique should specifically mention the application of all international resolutions, Saad reportedly told Youssef. This, Jumblatt commented, reflects the will of the Saudis.

¶9. (C) Jumblatt also stressed that March 14 needed to have people in place as soon as the president is elected; otherwise, he warned, we will be in situation where the Siniora government is a caretaker status only, and we have no LAF commander. This would be especially dangerous for the Druse, Hamadeh added, since, once Michel Sleiman becomes president, his Chief of Staff, General Shawki al-Masri (a Druse) would become acting commander, opening the government to more attacks that it is abusing its powers at the expense of the Christians.

OVERCOMING THE SUNNI-SHIA SPLIT

¶10. (C) Jumblatt, interrupted several times during the meeting by phone calls, explained that he was working on a communique that Lebanon's three Islamic spiritual leaders (Higher Islamic Shia Council head Qabbalan, Sunni Mufti Qabbani, and Druse Sheikh Hassan) intended to issue following their February 20 summit (subsequently postponed). The communique reportedly denounced the assassinations of former PM Rafiq Hariri and Hizballah military leader Imad Moughnieh

in such a way that, as Hamadeh put it, it equates a martyr with a terrorist.

¶11. (C) Laughing off (unsubstantiated) rumors of Druse involvement in the Moughnieh assassination, Jumblatt said, if we have the ability to get Moughnieh, why not Bashar Asad himself? Hamadeh reasoned that the absence of Syrian officials at Moughnieh's funeral was due to the Asad regime's embarrassment that the assassination took place on Syrian soil. The presence of Iranian FM Mottaki did not go over well with the Christians, he said, adding that Speaker Berri, a Shia, was himself was conveniently out of the country the day of the funeral.

¶12. (C) Jumblatt criticized Saad's efforts to "import" Sunnis from the north, suggesting instead that Saad should speak with independent Shia leaders such as MP Yassine Jaber, Loukman Slim, and (former Minister of Energy and former Amal member) Mohamad Youssef Beydoun to build better Sunni-Shia relations. Naseer al-Assad was also a useful interlocutor. (Note: Al-Assad already is working with the newly created March 14 Secretariat, Ref B. End note.) March 14 also should cultivate other potential supports, such as Lebanese Kurds; with a population of 100,000 in Lebanon, they are a "strong" electoral force, he said, and must be with March 14.

SCARING THE SYRIANS

¶13. (C) Jumblatt appeared unimpressed by recent developments regarding the establishment of the Special Tribunal, commenting that it would not stop the Syrians. The Tribunal is a long process, he explained, and Syria needs to feel scared to change its behavior. Jumblatt then noted the recent visit of the UAE Prime Minister to both Iran and Syria (Ref B) commenting that Rami Maklouf's family lived in the UAE.

SISON